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III.—LE CERCLE D'AMOUR.

Some twenty years ago M. Émile Picot had occasion to edit a group of sixteenth century French moralities, two of which were signed by the device "*Rien sans l'Esprit*." He discovered that this curious pseudonym veiled a certain Pierre Duval,¹ a poet of Rouen. On following up his researches, the learned Paris scholar found that Duval was the centre of a little group of poets who produced several modest volumes of verse during the last decade of the reign of Francis I.

Duval and his friends did their literary apprenticeship by writing verses in honour of the Virgin and offering them for competition at the feast of the Immaculate Conception annually celebrated by the *Puys de Notre Dame*, which at the end of the fifteenth and beginning of the sixteenth century were in a most flourishing condition in Rouen, Caen and other Norman cities.² The names of Pierre Duval and some of his companions whom I shall mention later appear amongst those of the contestants as early as 1533.³

Finally, in 1543, something more pretentious was determined on, and the result was the publication of a small collection of poems called the *Puy du Souverain Amour*. There are two words in this title to be noted: *Puy* and *Souverain*. *Puy* indicates the earlier and still influential association of the authors with the "palinods," for while the verse is not religious, prizes were awarded to the successful poets as at the competitions to which they had been accustomed. By *Souverain* is meant love at once spiritual, all powerful, all pervading, the love that used to be felt towards the Virgin now turned towards woman. That this idea of a love that

¹ V. Émile Picot : *Théâtre Mystique de Pierre Duval*, Paris, 1882, p. 43.

² *Ibid.*, p. 13.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

is chaste and other-worldly is conscious and deliberate in intention is evident, as one of those who submitted verses, Henri de Sassefen, was debarred from the contest because his poem touched "*l'amour lascif*."¹

The *Cercle d'Amour*² represents the competition of the following year, 1544. Apart from mention by M. Picot it has, I think, escaped attention. It consists of a collection of dizains by Pierre Duval and his coterie. The theme, as before, is the presentation of a transcendental conception of love, of what is best known by the very inexact, though not entirely inappropriate, name of "platonic" love. Such sentiments as these are not to be mistaken :

Par Venus terrestre j'entendz
L'amytié de ce monde immunde.
Par Venus celeste pretendz
L'amytié de Dieu pur et munde. (Dizain 26.)

Pudique Amour par souverains accordz
Unit les cueurs de moy et de madame.
Il fait de nous une chair et un corps,
De deux cueurs un, un esprit et une ame. (Dizain 27.)

This brings us face to face with one of the most important, one of the most characteristic, one of the most pervasive doctrines of the Renaissance, and as such the dizains of the *Cercle d'Amour* are a document of considerable interest. Before looking more closely at a few samples of these dizains, it may be well to cast an eye back and glance cursorily at some of the chief historical sources of platonism.³

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¹*Ibid.*, p. 40, note 1.

² *Le Cercle d'Amour*, published by Jehan Petit, Paris, 1544.

³ Attention has recently been drawn to Platonism by Professor J. B. Fletcher of Harvard, in an article in the April-June, 1903, number of the *Journal of Comparative Literature*, on *Précieuses at the Court of Charles I.* Mr. J. S. Harrison has lately published *Platonism in English Poetry*, New York, 1903.

What exactly the men of the Renaissance meant by their theories about love, how far they are to be taken seriously, how far they were a pose, or if not a pose, an extravagant expression of a half doubting though at bottom real creed,—there is no nicer question to decide. Apparently each case has to be judged, and judged warily, on its merits. How far did such a handbook of faith and practice as the *Courtier* affect the every-day life of that brilliant society that idled away the evenings in the ballroom at the court of Urbino? Probably to the average gentleman it signified little but a polite subject for conversation, but to some of the greatest minds of the age it had a deep and real meaning—to Michelangelo, to Margaret of Navarre, to Sir Philip Sidney.

Man was to be saved by the love of beauty in woman—not that love which the Middle Ages had thought generally sufficiently comprehended in a broad joke or a coarse story.¹ Man was to see in woman a beauty which was but the pale reflection of absolute beauty, and from a love of its earthly expression in woman was to rise to the contemplation of its heavenly original. By intellectual intercourse with a refined, cultured, and beautiful woman he was to be lifted out of his grosser self and put into harmony with the Eternal.

A few sentences from the *Asolani* of Cardinal Bembo, which was published in 1505, contain the first popular phrasing of the new gospel, and will put the ideas in a nutshell. An old hermit is instructing Lavinello, a fashionable young gentleman, in the theories of spiritual love. “How,” he asks, “can the dim light that shines in the eye of thy lady and which so affects thee, be compared with the splendour of those eternal beauties, so true, so pure, so noble? And, sweet and dear to thee as is thy lady’s voice, it is but an echo of the music of the celestial choirs, and though all her

¹ V. Abel Lefranc : *Le Platonisme et la Littérature en France à l'Époque de la Renaissance*. *Rev. d'Hist. Litt. de la France*, 1896, p. 25.

little ways and arts give thee an untold delight, how much greater the satisfaction to be derived from the mighty acts of the Omnipotent!"¹

The original source of these ideas is to be found in Plato, in particular in Plato's dialogue, the *Banquet*, where the doctrine of the power of love is preached with such wonderful eloquence by Socrates. But Plato cannot sufficiently account for the creed of the woman-worshipping sixteenth century. Plato has not woman in mind at all. With the Greek it is the youth² whose beauty causes the mind of the lover to rise into communion with the beauty which transfuses and transcends the universe. "We are still more surprised," remarks Jowett, "to find that the philosopher is incited to take the first step in his upward progress by the beauty of young men and boys, which was alone capable of inspiring the modern feeling of romance in the Greek mind. The passion of love took the spurious form of an enthusiasm for the ideal of beauty, a worship as of some god-like image of an Apollo or Antinous."³

A philosopher who had an influence almost as great as that of Plato himself over the thought of the Renaissance was the Alexandrian, Plotinus. The *Enneads*, like the works of Plato, were translated into Latin by Ficino, the head of the Platonic Academy at Florence, and so became the common property of educated Europe. Plotinus is a visionary thinker, deeply tinged with oriental mysticism. Like Plato he has his ladder of love by which man ascends from human to divine beauty, but with Plotinus the lowest rung is no longer a youth, but a woman.⁴ He makes the distinction also of a

¹ Pietro Bembo : *Opere*, 12 vols., Milan, 1808, vol. I, *Asolani*, p. 262.

² Jowett : *Dialogues of Plato*, 5 vols., London, 1892, vol. I, *Symposium*, 210.

³ *Ibid.*, vol. I, Introduction to *Symposium*, p. 534.

⁴ *Les Ennéades de Plotin*, Ennead III, Book V. (Translation of M. N. Bouillet, 3 vols., Paris, 1859, vol. II, pp. 105 ff.)

Celestial and Terrestrial Venus: the former contemplates the intelligible world and is divorced from matter; the latter presides over ordinary human love.¹ "He who wishes," says Plotinus in his book on Beauty, "to lay hold of the supreme beauty is to close his eyes to the world of sense; he must retire within himself and purify his mind from all dross, and himself become beautiful in order to perceive the beautiful. Gradually he shall rise to see that all beauty is in ideas," etc.² Though the general sense here relates Plotinus to the Renaissance, there is apparent in the foregoing passage a tendency to look, if not with contempt, at least merely with tolerance on the beauty of this world, a mood utterly at war with the sensuous spirit of the age of Lorenzo the Magnificent.

It is evident that the great divergence between Plato and the Platonists of the Renaissance was the difference of viewpoint on one subject—woman. Plato saw in her a necessary evil; Castiglione saw God in woman. What wrought the change? The influence of Plotinus must have reckoned for something, but there is another and great factor to be counted. Christianity is the most obvious force which demands consideration. In the history of Christianity there is one figure which in this sphere must have exerted untold weight. Although in the canonical gospels the Virgin Mary is an almost strangely inconspicuous personage, in the early church her rôle and prestige rapidly took on great proportions.

The heathen world into which Christianity came had been accustomed to its goddesses, and replaced old time favorites with the pure and gentle figure of the mother of Jesus.³ She seized hold in a wonderful way on the popular imagination. The idea of her sanctity must have been increased by her association with the mystery of the Incarnation, but until

¹*Ibid.*, vol. II, pp. 106 ff. ² Enneads I vi, (Bouillet, vol. I, pp. 111 ff.).

³ V. Philip Schaff, *Rise and Progress of Mariolatry*, in *Contemporary Review*, April, 1867.

the Nestorian controversy her position amongst the other saints had been rather that of primacy than superiority. With the triumph, however, in 430, of the name "Mother of God" the cult of Mary took a great step forward. From now 'on the church can but increase her titles, pay deeper homage to her dignity, and the centuries but multiply her honours. She is called the "Indestructible Temple of God," the "Loom of the Incarnation," the "Bridge from God to Man," "through her the Trinity is glorified and adored, the devils and demons are put to flight, the nations converted and the fallen creatures raised to Heaven."¹

It is impossible to believe that this glorification of one woman would not lead to a greater respect for all her sex. God the Father and God the Son were too far removed from the range of the individual human experience, but this woman who had been a mother, who was all gracious, was also the Queen of Heaven, and her pleadings for sinners were powerful with the great Judge of all.

In the title "Bridge from God to Man" a woman has taken the place of the Christ, and has become the reconciler, the mediator, the means of man's approach to the Divine. In the sixth century, as in the sixteenth, man saw God in woman and was put in harmony with Him through her. The analogy cannot be pressed too far, but the fundamental feeling is the same.

The popularity of the Virgin showed no falling off as the years passed into generations, and almost every century saw a new feast-day established by the church in her honour. The most important of these festivals, the Immaculate Conception, though not formally promulgated till fifty years ago, was first celebrated at Lyons in 1140. This is an interesting date. Troubadour poetry, which centres round the worship of the lady, was then in early bloom. Lyons, it is worth remem-

¹*Ibid.*

bering, while not in Provence, is on its border and on the route thither from the north.

Art from Giotto and Fra Angelico to Botticelli and Raphael is concerned above all with expressing the life and graces of the Virgin. Great cathedrals, each with its splendid Lady-chapel, rose and were named after her, and every one of their thousand nooks and crannies contained her image.

In 1534, while at Rouen Pierre Duval and his friends were composing rondeaux and chants-royaux in honour of Mary, Ignatius Loyola and his six companions were vowing at Montmartre, near Paris, to wage war on the enemies of Jesus and especially, doubtless because the Reform fought fiercely against Mariolatry, on the foes of the Virgin, the Queen of Heaven, whose knight in chivalrous fashion Loyola armed himself.¹

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In spite of the high-flown language of the Troubadour lyric it would be absurd in the face of Andreas Capellanus' codified laws of immorality² to take any ideal view of the relations of the fair dames of the twelfth century and their attendant squires. Yet it is important to note that this poetry heralds the emergence of woman. The queen or countess is no longer the mere upper cook and rearer of children. She has become an object of admiration and adoration, if not to her own husband, at least to another man. Sometimes the language of admiration can be easily accounted for, as in the case of Peire Rogier³ and the Countess Ermengarde of Narbonne. Peire, who was a poor poet, was dependent on his mistress for his clothes and meals, and naturally does not mince matters when he pays compliments.

¹ Haag : *Histoire des Dogmes*, Paris, 1862, p. 431.

² Andreas Capellanus, ed. Trojel, Havniae, 1892, pp. 106 and 310 ff.; cf. also W. A. Neilson, *Court of Love*, Boston, 1899, p. 176 ff.

³ Diez : *Leben und Werke der Troubadours*, Leipsic, 1882, p. 79.

The feudal system, indeed, with its idea of vassal and lord, and of the obligation on the strong to defend the weak, affected powerfully the relations of the sexes. The weaker vessel, whom it was the sworn duty of the knight to protect, became the lord, and the great baron her humble vassal. At her nod, in order to prove his allegiance, he must be ready to undergo shame. At Guinivere's commands Lancelot allows himself to be defeated at the tournament.¹ He takes almost the ascetic pleasure in humiliating himself by riding upon the cart² which the monk might take in doing penance to secure the favour of the Virgin. He behaves before her exactly as he would before a statue of Mary. "He worships her, and kneels down before her, for in no holy body does he so believe."³

Even though all this posing and phrasing had an illicit purpose, it did put the lady in the superior position. She had favours to bestow, and was soon found to be dictating terms to those who claimed her grace.

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The indebtedness of Dante to Provençal literature is an established fact of literary history,⁴ and Beatrice must be looked upon as the true culmination on its theoretic side of the heroine of the courtly lyric. Dante excludes the material entirely. "This much alone," writes Boccaccio, who cannot certainly be accused of any transcendental bias, "I do not wish to pass over without mention, namely, that

¹ Chrétien de Troyes, *Chevalier de la Charette*, ed. P. Tarbé, Paris, 1849, ll. 5655 ff.

² V. L. F. Mott : *System of Courtly Love*, Boston, 1896, pp. 41-42.

³ V. Chretien de Troyes : *Chevalier de la Charette*, l. 4652 ; cf. also Mott, *System of Courtly Love*, p. 117. The opposite of this, the application of amorous language to the Virgin, is common in the Renaissance. Cf. Margaret of Navarre, *Marguerites*, ed. Frank, 4 vols., Paris, 1873, poem *Comédie du Désert*, vol. II, p. 188.

⁴ Cf. Mott : *System of Courtly Love*, pp. 142 ff.

according as he [Dante] himself writes, and as others to whom his passion was known bear witness, this love was most virtuous, nor did there ever appear by look or word or sign any sensual appetite either in the lover or in the thing beloved.”¹

A discussion of the attitude of Dante to Beatrice would demand a book for itself. It is most essential at present merely to note that Dante found in a woman, or at least figured in a woman, whom in her life-time he had loved, the dynamic of his regeneration. When Beatrice is called away to Heaven she is enrolled “under the banner of that most holy Queen Mary, whose name was ever spoken with greatest reverence by this most gentle Beatrice.”²

Beatrice was too little a creature of flesh and blood, too ethereal, too highly spiritualized, to make any appeal to ordinary life. Still, whenever Dante was mentioned, her name would silently accompany his, and for cultured people “Madonna” must have had connotations literary as well as theological, and one sense might be almost as sacred as the other. Dante’s influence over succeeding generations was immense. Lorenzo and Michelangelo, each of them deeply tinged with platonism, were both profoundly versed in Dante.

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It is necessary to name Petrarch, but it is not necessary to dwell on him. Whatever we may state at times as to the innocence of his affection for Laura, some lines still stand in the *Rime* which argue better for Laura’s virtue than Petrarch’s veracity.³ His importance lies in another direction. Besides seeing in Laura the objective of his desires, he recognizes in his better moments that the influence of the good

¹ J. R. Smith : *Boccaccio’s Life of Dante*, New York, 1901, p. 20.

² C. E. Norton, *New Life of Dante Alighieri*, Boston, 1902, Chap. XXIX.

³ *V. Le Rime*, ed. Carducci, Florence, 1899, Sestina xxii, ll. 31 ff.; Sonnet lvi, Sonnet lxxviii, etc.

and beautiful woman he has so long adored has been a refining and purifying factor in his life, and that he owes her many of his highest aspirations.¹ After the death of Laura this mood grows more marked, and Petrarch speaks constantly of her uplifting power.²

His verse-form, the sonnet, became in the Renaissance the universal vehicle for amorous poetry, and it is necessary to be sharply on the lookout not to confound mere courtly compliment or poetic exercise expressed in the exaggerated language which Petrarch and his imitators inherited from the Troubadours, with verse written in the same metrical form on the same subject, but drawing its essential derivation from another source. On the one hand Wyatt must not be mistaken for Sidney, nor on the other hand is Michelangelo to be explained by Serafino d'Aquila.

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In 1460 Cosimo de' Medici founded at Florence the Platonic Academy, and Marsilio Ficino, who since boyhood had been in training in the Medici household as a Greek scholar, became its president. His life-work was the rendering of Plato into Latin. One part of his translation which aroused the greatest interest was Plato's theory of love, particularly as presented in the *Symposium*. Ficino, himself composed on the *Banquet a Commentary*³ in seven parts and seventy-two chapters, in which he shews that he does not understand his text, by reading into it mystical conceptions which he had doubtless imbibed from the Alexandrians. The *Commentary* has an interesting reference to the "philosopher Guido Cavalcanti,"⁴ which proves that the

¹*Ibid*: cf. Sonnet clv, etc.

²*Ibid*: cf. Sonnets cclxxxix, ccxc, ccxvi, etc.

³This may be consulted in Ficino's works published at Frankfort in 1602: v. pp. 1137-1173.

⁴*Ibid.*, vii, i.

thought of the thirteenth century was still an active force in the mind of the translator of Plato.

At any rate the new theories, a medley of Plato and Plotinus, sown on a soil prepared by Mariolatry and chivalrous ideals, created a lively curiosity. In his translation of Plotinus Ficino says, in a letter addressed to Lorenzo and prefixed to the chapter on Love, that his patron will not expect a long discourse on love here, partly as he had already treated it at length in connection with the *Symposium*, but mostly because Lorenzo himself had written so many elegant songs on the subject.¹

An early product of the interest in the new conceptions of a divine love is to be found in Benivieni's canzone on "Amore." So obscure is this poem that were it not for the *Commentary*² of Pico della Mirandola it would be almost incomprehensible. Pico thinks of the beauty of women as the first step in the ladder of love which is to lead the soul to communion with the Divine.³ While he refers constantly to Plato, his explanations are loaded with a vast amount of mystical philosophy.⁴

Hitherto this platonism—for so it may be called in spite of its hybrid origin—had been in the hands of scholars. It remained for some one to make it common property. The evangelist was to be Cardinal Bembo, and his message was contained in the dialogues of the *Asolani*, of which I have already spoken. The book was very successful and in the years following its appearance ran through numerous editions. A great impetus was given to platonic theories by the publication in 1528 of the *Courtier*, by Bembo's friend, Casti-

¹ Ficino, ed. Creuzer, Oxford, 3 vols., 1833, vol. I, p. 522. The *Altercazione*, a poem by Lorenzo, is a dialogue between Ficino and himself on the subject of love.

² The Canzone and Commentary are both printed in Benivieni's *Opere*, Venice, 1522.

³ *Ibid.* : Chap. XIV.

⁴ *Ibid.* : cf. Chaps. VIII and XIV.

glione. The work had been written at least ten years before, and when at last printed its vogue was immense. Practically every year for a decade saw a new edition or a reprint. In 1537 it was translated into French, and immediately ran through several editions. Garcilaso de la Vega happened to be in Venice when the *Courtier* first appeared, and he sent off post haste a copy to Boscán. A Spanish version by the latter came out at Salamanca in 1540. In 1561 it was given an English dress by Hoby.

There is no mistaking the drift of the *Courtier*. It is a document for platonism; it is a sermon on the text of feminism.¹ Book I discusses the gentleman in general; Book II deals with particular instances; Book III treats the lady who corresponds to the courtier; Book IV takes up the relation of the courtier to his prince, but the climax is not, as one might naturally expect, the courtier's relation to God, but his relation to the lady of Book III. The final chapters, a most eloquent sermon on the saving power of spiritual love, are very fittingly put into the mouth of Cardinal Bembo, and are an emphatic, glowing, almost ecstatic restatement of the doctrines preached by the old Hermit to Lavinello in the *Asolani*.

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It is now time to turn to France and look at the growth of platonism there.²

Ficino's name had soon crossed the Alps, for in 1489 his *De Triplici Vita* was published at Rouen; his translation of Plato, printed by Jehan Petit, appeared in 1518. In an

¹A recent, though not very satisfactory, discussion of the question of Renaissance feminism is Maulde La Clavière's *Femmes de la Renaissance*, Paris, 1898.

²For details regarding this movement, v. Abel Lefranc: *Le Platonisme et la Littérature en France à l'époque de la Renaissance*, *Rev. de l'Hist. Litt. de la France*, 1896, pp. 1 ff.

edition of 1533 of the same work Plato is referred to as the "God of philosophers," which indicates his growing prestige. In 1541 Des Périers translated his *Lysis* into French. This was the first of the dialogues to appear in the vernacular. Three years later Dolet turned into French the *Axiochus* and the *Hipparchus*. In 1546 Jean de la Haye, at the express command of Margaret of Navarre, turned into French Ficino's *Commentary* on the *Symposium*. The following year Margaret's friend, Pierre Duval, the Bishop of Séz, probably no relation to Pierre Duval of the *Cercle d'Amour*, translated the *Crito*. Another of the queen's intimates, Antoine Heroët, whose work, the *Parfaite Amie*, is saturated in platonic doctrine, wrote the *Androgyne*—a poem based directly on Plato.

Other solvents beside the action alone of Greek philosophy were at work on French thought. It was no vain prophecy which Castiglione uttered in the *Courtier*. Complaint has been made that though the French make much of military glory, they not merely neglect letters, but despise them. Giuliano de' Medici replies that all will change in France with the advent to the crown of Francis I, and that as arms now lend splendour to the French name, so letters also will flourish to an equal degree.¹

Such was the literal fact. Modern France begins at 1515. Transalpine culture had poured northward since the raid of Charles VIII. The centre of the new Italianate learning was the king's sister Margaret of Navarre, who gave her patronage to every liberal movement in philosophy, literature, and theology,—to Dolet, to Rabelais, to Calvin. Her own writings give expression to the agitated thought of the period. Her interest in the new theories about love was intense, and the *Heptameron*, the *Marguerites*, and the *Der-*

¹ *Cortegiano*, ed. Cian, Florence, 1894, I, xlv.

nières Poésies are all full of references to platonism and expositions of it.¹

But besides being the centre in France of these intellectual currents which are characteristic of the Renaissance generally, Margaret appears to have been under another influence. In her later years her protestantism developed into a sort of pantheism.² There had arisen in Flanders in the early part of the sixteenth century a sect called the *Libertins Spirituels*. Its leaders, Poques and Quentin, preached a mystical gospel of love and the spirit, which, according to Calvin, who launched against them a ferocious tract,³ led only to the most appalling moral degradation and social corruption. Margaret, who was at the time harbouring the two high priests of the new mysticism, wrote to Calvin protesting against his attack on her and her servants, and Calvin replied in April, 1545, from Geneva, rather sternly to the letter. He congratulated her on the assistance she had in the past afforded to members of the Reformed Church, but warned her in plain speech to beware of these new and dangerous heresies.⁴ Relations between the queen and her two protégés cannot, however, have been broken off, because during the year 1548-9, the last of Margaret's life, Poques drew as almoner eighty livres from her treasury.⁵

The doctrines, or rather lack of doctrines, of these "Libertins," may be seen at first hand in an interesting little vol-

¹ Cf. *Heptameron*, novel 24; *Marguerites*, ed. Frank, vol. iv, *Mort et Resurrection D'Amour*; *Dernières Poésies*, ed. Lefranc, Paris, 1896, *Comédie Jouée au Mont Marson*. One instance from each will suffice. They might be added to indefinitely.

² Lefranc, *Idées Religieuses de Marguerite de Navarre*, Paris, 1898, pp. 110 ff.

³ V. Calvin's Tract: *Adversus fanaticam et furiosam sectam Libertinorum qui se spirituales vocant*. For a good account of the *Libertins Spirituels* v. Auguste Jundt, *Histoire du Panthéisme Populaire*, Paris, 1875.

⁴ V. Calvin's Letters, ed. Bonnet, 2 vols., Paris, 1854, vol. i, p. 111.

⁵ Ferrière-Percy, *Livre de Dépenses*, Paris, 1862, p. 178.

ume, *Traité Mystiques*, published by Professor Karl Schmidt, of Strassburg, in 1876. There is no author's name attached, merely the initials "J. F." Schmidt conjectured, from reasons which I need not detail here, that the volume may have been intended as a present to Margaret of Navarre. M. Picot points out the identity of teaching between that of the *Traité Mystiques* and that of Pierre Duval's circle,¹ and drawing attention to the fact that one of the authors to win a prize at the *Puy de Souverain Amour* was a Jehan Feré, suggests that "J. F." may be Jehan Ferré, vicomte de Domfort, Margaret's secretary. This supposition is rendered the more likely by an entry in the *Livre de Dépenses*, which seems hitherto to have escaped observation. Under date of December 7th, 1548, Jehan Frotté records that a pension of xxv livres was paid to "Jean Corne, dict des Minières."² Now Jehan des Minières contributed verses to the *Puy du Souverain Amour*, and, under the device *J'anime Hardiesse*, also to the *Cercle d'Amour*.

Pierre Duval's coterie, who in 1533 were enthusiastically singing mystical hymns in honour of the Immaculate Conception, later, as we shall see in their poetry, became tinged with platonism, and like Margaret, appear to have come under the spell of the heretical teachings of the *Libertins Spirituels* and probably finally accepted the reformed theology. And if, as seems probable, the little group of Rouen poets, whether on account of their unorthodox opinions, or for whatever reason, fell on evil days about 1547,³ it would be natural that Jehan Ferré should introduce his friend, Jehan des Minières, to Margaret's notice and procure for him a little assistance in shelter and money.

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¹ E. Picot : *Théâtre Mystique de Pierre Duval*, p. 67.

² Ferrière-Percy : *Livre de Dépenses*, p. 190.

³ V. E. Picot, *Théâtre Mystique de Pierre Duval*, p. 68.

The "*Cercle d'Amour auquel estoient escriptes quatre lignes chantées par les Poetes devant les Dieux immortelz*" was published in 1544 by the celebrated printer, Jehan Petit. The volume consists in the first place of a dedicatory dizain, which is signed *Rien sans l'Esprit* and in which the reference to the month of May at once awakens an echo of Provence and the twelfth century :

Nobles seigneurs damoiselles et dames,
 Qui prenez tout à gré et passetemps,
 Pour vostre May plein d'amoureuses flammes
 Cestuy livret vous offrir je pretendz, etc.

Then follows a prose introduction, written in an aureate pseudo-classic style. The poets who are to contribute dizains are "*Amantz . . . de la déesse Pallas*," which indicates the intellectual bias of the writers. Jupiter having given his permission, the poets are summoned to recite their productions on the "*théâtre de magnificence*," which has been erected for the occasion. On each of the four sides of a "*cercle carré*" the god of poetry writes one of the following lines :

Jamais amour ne peult estre sans grace.
 Toutes à l'œil, mais une au cueur me touche.
 Il n'est ennuy que d'amoureuse absence.
 Foy garde amour et amour donne grace.

With one of the four each dizain submitted must conclude. To stimulate the contestants, as in the *Puy du Souverain Amour*, Justice offers a first and second prize for those dizains which are adjudged the best. As some inconvenience had arisen from naming the competing poets the year before, on this occasion no names are to be mentioned. This preface is signed like the introductory dizain by *Rien sans l'Esprit*—Pierre Duval.

The poems "sung before the immortal gods" now follow. They are all dizains and have the same rime-scheme—

a b a b b c c d c d—as those of Maurice Scève's *Delie* which was published the same year. There are in all one hundred and forty-five (145) dizains. Of these twenty-two (22) end in, “Jamais amour ne peult estre sans grace;” twenty-three (23) in, “Toutes à l'œil mais une au cueur me touche;” fifty-eight (58) in “Il n'est ennuy que d'amoureuse absence;” and forty-two (42) in “Foy garde amour et amour donne grace.” Three dizains, nos. 4, 24, and 26, have four octosyllabic lines prefixed to them. In the case of the 24th and 16th this is styled an “argument.” Of the total number sixty-three (63) are quite anonymous, but in spite of the editor's statement in the preface that there will be no names, four (4) of the dizains are signed, no. 109 by J. Boscachard, and nos. 126, 127, and 128 by R. Bréard. The remaining seventy-nine (79) are signed by devices,¹ some of which can be deciphered, some of which can not. *Rien sans l'esprit*, Pierre Duval, the compiler of the collection, writes the largest number, twenty-three (23), as well as the dedicatory dizain and the preface. *J'anime hardiesse*, an anagram of Jehan des Minières—who we have seen was a pensioner of Margaret of Navarre—comes next with eleven (11) to his credit. *A tous clement*, which may hide Clément Hesbert, follows with nine (9). Nine (9) are also signed by *Ne hay le coup*, an anagram of Jehan Coupel. *Leger esprit ravit*, Pierre Gaultier, is responsible for seven (7). *Rien qui ne veult*, Marie du Val, composes one (1). *En ennuy repos*, who is the author of eight (8), *Difficilia quae pulchra* of three (3), *Nul bien sans Dieu*, *Rien sinon la*, and *S'il en a, il en est*, each contributing one dizain, all remain unidentified.

Pierre Duval himself, whom M. Picot has laboriously tracked, is the only one of the entire group about whose life

¹ For information regarding the devices, v. E. Picot, *Théâtre mystique de Pierre Duval*, Introduction.

any details can be gathered. He vanishes from view at Rouen in 1547 to reappear in London in 1552, and died, in no high favour with Calvin seemingly, as minister of a band of exiled French protestants at Emden in 1558.¹

The names of those of the rest of Duval's friends that have been deciphered remain but names, and the memory of the very existence of that little circle of Norman poets who sang of a sovereign love, a mixture of Mariolatry and pantheism and platonism, has long since been forgotten.

We may now glance at a few of these dizains, some of which will be found not without interest.

No. 4.

In the introductory lines the stress laid on the "tout" harks away back to Plotinus and finds also an echo in contemporary poetry of the same tone. Margaret of Navarre² reverts continually to the nothingness of the creature and the omnipotence of the Creator. Here the image is transferred to the relation of the sexes.

Dizain.

Ayant receu l'amour et grace
De mon amy par vive foy,
De mon rien en son tout en moy
Son amour et grace compasse.

Soubz loy d'amour ou grace a unité
De mon amy j'espere jouyssance.
A luy parfoys j'ay telle affinité
Qu'en luy seul tien ma totale esperance.
Il peult en moy, en luy est ma puissance.
Et sans luy n'ay la grace de l'aymer,

¹ *Ibid.* : pp. 76 and 77.

² Cf. Marg. de Navarre : *Marguerites*, ed. Frank, vol. II, p. 132, and *Dernières Poésies*, ed. Lefranc, Intro. p. lxix, and poem *Prisons*, p. 245.

Tant plus le voy, plus me fait enflammer
 En son amour ou grace me soulace :
 Dont croy qu'ainsi que sans eau n'est la mer
 Jamais amour ne peult estre sans grace.

Leger esprit ravy.

No. 5.

That love is the supreme thing in life is evident, because it was the cause of the sacrifice of Calvary and the means of the salvation of the world. It was love, too, that forgave Mary Magdalene. The reference to St. Paul, who was the authority par excellence of the religious reform, is significant.

Dizain.

Qui fait en croix le corps de Jesus Christ
 Rendre son sang, mesmes sa propre vie ?
 Ne fust ce pas, comme Saint Paul descript,
 L'exces d'amour dont mort est asservie ?
 Qu'en avons nous ? Une grace assouvie,
 Nous assurant ¹ de la gloire certaine.
 N'as tu pas eu pardon, Ô Magdaleine,
 Par bien aimer ton maistre qui t'embrasse ?
 Cela est vray, car par vertu haultaine
 Jamais amour ne peult estre sans grace.

Difficilia quæ pulchra.

No. 11.

Love cannot exist without "grace."² "Grace" is the fruit of love, and love is to be recognized by its fruit as the tree is. The reference is probably to the refining influence of a pure love. The Queen of Navarre speaks of having permitted a man's attentions in order to improve him :

¹ Text : *asseurnt.*

² Cf. Vittoria Colonna : *Rime e Lettere*, Florence, 1860, *Rime sacre e morali*, no. clxx.

Vous faisiez tant semblant de bien m'entendre,
 Que je me mis de propos en propos
 A vous hanter, esperant *bon vous rendre*.¹

Margaret dismissed this "serviteur" because he mistook her meaning.

Dizain.

Ainsi qu'amour par grace on peult congnoistre,
 Sans grace amour ne peult estre congneu ;
 Et si l'amour n'en veult grace permettre,
 Ce n'est amour, mais un rien incongneu.
 Car comme l'arbre² est au fruit recongneu
 Duquel sans fruit on ne peult pas juger,
 Grace est le fruit de l'amoureux verger
 Sans qui amour ne se peult veoir en face.
 Dont comme nef n'est en mer sans dangier,
 Jamais amour ne peult estre sans grace.

J'anime hardiesse.

No. 13.

Here we learn that love is to be found where virtue dwells. As in the poetry of Provence,³ it is the eye which is the channel through which love makes his attack.

Dizain.

Ou gist amour ? la ou vertu demeure.
 Que pretend il ? pour luy seul acquerir
 La dame en qui le sien cueur fait demeure.
 Par quel moyen la peult il requerrir ?
 Par le sien œil qui fait vivre et mourir.
 Qu'en revient il ? une amoureuse flamme
 Bruslant le corps,⁴ le cueur, l'esprit et l'ame,

¹ Margaret of Navarre : *Dernières Poésies*, ed. Lefranc, *Les Adieux*, p. 352.

² Text : *l'arbre*.

³ Cf. Bernart de Ventadorn in Bartsch, *Chrest. Prov.*, 5th ed., Berlin, 1892, col. 61, l. 2 ; cf. also Jacopo da Lentino in D'Ancona e Bacci, *Man. della Lett. ital.*, 6th ed., Florence, 1898, vol. I, p. 44, *Natura e origine d'Amore*.

⁴ Text : *corpss*.

Mille plaisirs quand la dame on embrasse :
 Voyla comment par vertu qui enflame
 Jamais amour ne peult estre sans grace.

Difficilia quae pulchra.

No. 24.

This is a bit of pure platonism. All love of this world, says the poet, is vain, where the faithful heart is not concerned, but true love is found in the only certain goodness. The object of the poet's affections is the goodness of God, which he describes as the daughter of love and sister of wisdom. He sees the divine goodness everywhere, and in contemplation of the beauty of goodness is thrown into ecstasy. Goodness is his "idea."¹ The use of the word "idée" suggests at once the *Délie* of Maurice Scève, which, like the *Cercle d'Amour*, was published in 1544. *Délie* is only an anagram of *Idée*. In Scève's hundred and eighty-fifth dizain the thought is closely parallel to that above :

Pour m'incliner souvent à celle image
 De ta beaulté esmerveillable Idée
 Je te presente autant de foyz l'hommage
 Que toute loy en saveur decidée
 Te peult donner—etc.

The final note is again struck on the *tout* and *rien*.

Argument.

Toute amytié du monde est vaine
 Ou le cueur fidele ne tend,
 Mais la vraie amitié pretend
 En la seule bonté certaine.

¹For *idea* in this sense, cf. Plotinus, *Enneads*, I, vi. (Translation by Bouillet, Paris, 1859 : vol. I, p. 113.)

Dixain de l'Amant Parfaict.

Celle que j'aime est la bonté de Dieu,
 Fille d'amour, et sœur de sapience.
 Au cueur me touche et la voy en tout lieu,
 Tant suis ravy en sa beaulté immense.
 C'est mon ydee, aux aultres je ne pense.
 Elle a mon tout, et sans elle n'ay rien.
 Je l'ay sans veoir, et sans toucher la tien
 Par vive foy, ou mon seul espoir couche.¹
 Ainsi tousjours pour un esperé bien
 Toutes à l'œil, mais une au cueur me touche.

Leger esprit ravit.

No. 26.

We find here an explicit statement regarding the heavenly and earthly Venus.² In the pure celestial love the poet places his only hope and finds no pleasure in the beauty of the present world.

Argument.

Par Venus terrestre j'entendz
 L'amytié de ce monde immunde.
 Par Venus celeste pretendz
 L'amytié de Dieu pur et munde.

Dizain.

Venus terrestre et ses graces me sont
 Toutes à l'œil et au cueur sans plaisance.
 Venus celeste ou vray amour s'infond
 Ravit mes sens soubz fidele assurance.
 En ceste la gist ma seule esperance,
 Tant suis touché au cueur de sa bonté.

¹ For this creature of the imagination, cf. sonnet by Cosimo Rucellai, in *Curiosità Letterarie*, vol. 133, Bologna, 1873, p. 41.

² For the philosophic phrasing of the doctrine of the celestial and terrestrial Venus, cf. Plotinus, *Enneads*, III, v (Translation by Bouillet, vol. II, pp. 106 ff.).

Ceste sans plus l'a par grace dompté
 Qu'aulture amytié à mon desir ne couche.
 Elle est mon tout, dont pour rien j'ay compté
 Toutes à l'œil, mais une au cueur me touche.

Rien sinon la.

No. 27.

There is no mistaking the word "pudique." This is spiritual love, and yet it is a real bond between the lover and his lady : it makes of them :

Une chair et un corps,
 De deux cueurs un, un esprit et une ame.

Even the author asks a pertinent question : It is all very well to cherish this other-worldly love for his lady, but is he not liable to be tempted by ordinary love? He replies no, that his heart full of happiness depends on his lady alone.

Dizain.

Pudique amour par souverains accordz
 Unit les cueurs de moy et de madame.
 Il faict de vous une chair et un corps,
 De deux cueurs un, un esprit et une ame.
 Qui rompra donc ceste unité sans blasme?
 Sera ce l'œil d'autre amour excité?
 Non, car mon cueur plein de felicité
 Son amytié en une seule couche.
 Ainsi sans rompre amoureuse unité
 Toutes à l'œil, mais une au cueur me touche.

En ennuy repos.

No. 28.

This, signed like no. 27 by *En ennuy repos*, deals with the question already raised in the former. How can the spiritual lover keep himself from being tempted to sin at the sight of

the beauty and grace of an "earthly Venus?" The reply is an appeal to the purity and constancy of the heart that loves "perfectly." It cannot be surprised by passion; the eye may yield, but the true heart stands firm.

Dizain.

Quoy que mon cuer en ferme loyauté
Se soit uny par amour à madame,
Pourra mon œil veoir la grace et beaulté
D'une Venus sans sentir quelque flame?
Non, mais mon cuer qui parfaitement ame,
De ceste flame estre ne peult surpris.
L'œil peult faillir, le cuer est sans mespris;
Debile est l'œil, le cuer fort à la touche.
Voyla comment, dames d'honneur et prix,
Toutes à l'œil, mais une au cuer me touche.

En ennuy repos.

No. 44.

This dizain is the first by Pierre Duval himself. His heart, the poet says, is touched by "happy wisdom" through which his soul with a pure conscience wins the "integrity of perfect love." He has surveyed the field of knowledge, but in the end love is for him the supreme thing.

Dizain.

Par vive foy unie en charité
Au cuer me touche heureuse sapience,
Soubz qui mon ame obtient l'intégrité
D'amour parfait en pure conscience.
Devant mon œil est toute aultre science
Dont bien souvent j'ay contemplé l'escript.
Mais une seule espouse a Jesus Christ
M'est souefve au cuer comme miel en bouche.
Ainsi par grace au bien de mon esprit
Toutes à l'œil, mais une au cuer me touche.

Rien sans l'esprit.

No. 45.

Before the poet's eyes pass the "daughters of Sion," but one of them only touches his heart with her fairy beauty. He sees them all, yet but one affects him. To her he intrusts his all, and his "grace" he finds in the grace of his lady.

Dizain.

Devant mon œil les filles de Sion ¹
 Passoyent un jour au travers de la préé,
 Mais l'une d'eux ² seule en perfection
 Toucha mon cœur de sa beaulté faérée.
 Toutes les voy, mais seule me recrée.
 En elle ay mis mes tresors et mes biens,
 Par reciproque aussi les siens sont miens,
 Si qu'en sa grace ou ma grace se couche
 Je tien ce point qu'en ma foy je maintiens
 Toutes à l'œil, mais une au cœur me touche.

Rien sans l'esprit.

No. 50.

Duval, with his spiritual conception of love, from which he has separated all that is earthly, does not hesitate to describe Mary Magdalene as weeping for the absence of her "amy," the Christ.

Dizain.

S'esbahit on si Magdalene plore
 En regretant le sien amy absent,
 Veu qu'en luy gist sa vertu et sa gloire
 Et que de luy tant aimée se sent ?
 Si par l'absence ennuy au cœur descend,
 Chanter convient ; ce n'est pas de merveille

¹ Cf. Song of Songs, III, 11.

² *eux* : *el* is an established O. F. form for feminine *ele*—(Cf. Schwan-Behrens, Altfranz. Gram., para. 322-3) ; *eux* probably represents the plural of this.

Si Magdalene aujourdhuy s'appareille
 De son amy regretter la presence,
 Consideré qu'en douleur non pareille
 Il n'est ennuy que d'amoureuse absence.

Rien sans l'esprit.

No. 52.

This is a companion piece to no. 45. The lady, who loves her suitor with a pure and holy love, still feels deeply his absence and in woe calls upon the "daughters of Sion," if they should find him, to tell him that she is drooping for love of him, and that separation from him is the bitterest of evils.

Dizain.

La dame aymant d'amour pudic et saint
 Le sien amy beau en perfection,
 Pour son absence ayant le cueur estrainct,
 Disoit ainsi : O filles de Sion,
 Si vous trouvez en quelque mansion
 Le mien amy que seul veulx reclamer,
 Annoncez luy que languis pour l'aimer,
 Et qu'il m'est grief que ne voy sa presence ;
 Car sur tous maulx dont l'effect est amer
 Il n'est ennuy que d'amoureuse absence.

Rien sans l'esprit.

No. 69.

Here the love of a virtuous man is described as a "perfect possession." He has his lady's heart, and she has his. She pleases him, his will is in accord with hers. If he suffers she sympathizes ; if all goes well with him, she reaps half the advantage ; for they are made one person by their mutual love.

Dizain.

J'ay en ce monde acquis un parfait bien,
 C'est l'amitié d'un homme vertueux.
 Il a mon cuer par foy, et j'ay le sien ;
 Je luy complais, il veult ce que je veulx.
 S'il a du mal, comme luy je me deulx ;
 S'il a du bien, j'en reçoÿ¹ la moitié ;
 Car deux en un sommes par amitié ;
 C'est mon soulas, le sien est ma presence.
 Mais separez² de nous veoir c'est pitié,
 Il n'est ennuy que d'amoureuse absence.
 J'estendz es temps.

No. 78.

This dizain is interesting. Matches have usually in France been made, not on a basis of inclination, but of convenience. Here, however, it chances quite exceptionally that two people who have been "vrais amantz" are united in marriage. The rest of the poem merely develops the grief caused by absence.

Dizain.

Deux vrais amantz unis par mariage
 Eulx entre³ aimantz sans blasme, un jour advint
 Que le mari avec bon equipage
 Monta sur mer, pensant que tost revint.
 Ce qu'il ne feit, dont si fort luy souvint
 De ses amours qu'il alloit expirant.
 La dame aussi pour luy va souspirant.
 L'amant la songe, et la dame à luy pense ;
 L'amant se plainct, la dame dict plorant :
 Il n'est ennuy que d'amoureuse absence.

No. 104.

This dizain, which was awarded the first prize, is devoted to singing the necessity of the union of love and faith : faith

¹ Text : *recoÿ*.² Text : *separez*.³ Text : *entte*.

without love is a body without a soul ; love without faith is a body deserted by the soul. Where both exist there is added grace, grace of the goodness of God, which surpasses human goodness.

Dizain.

PREMIER PRIX.

Foy sans amour, c'est quoy ? un corps sans ame ;
 Amour sans foy, c'est (l'ame absente) un corps ;
 Foy en amour, un vif effect sans blasme,
 Qui rend deux cueurs en union concordz :
 Amour en foy expelle tous discordz.
 Et la ou foy (joincte à amour) preside,
 Grace en tout temps, malgré vice, y reside
 Du bien de Dieu qui bien humain surpasse.
 Par ce moyen en cueur d'amant solide
 Foy garde amour, et amour donne grace.

No. 105.

This dizain carried off the second prize. Entranced by amorous desire, by the eye of faith the poet has known "ferme amour." Love then took up his abode in his disciple's heart. Whether "jouyr" (l. 7) is to be taken here in an innocent sense, as it apparently is in no. 108, seems questionable. Perhaps we meet here the cloven hoof of the Libertins Spirituels.

Dizain.

2 PRIX.

Estant ravy d'un amoureux desir
 A l'œil de foy j'ay congneu ferme amour,
 Lequel voiant qu'en luy prenois plaisir,
 Secretement en moy feit son sejour.
 Par foy le garde en mon cueur nuit et jour.
 Or puis qu'amour fait en moy son repere
 Assuré suis de jouyr ou j'espere ;
 Car pour l'amant amour grace pourchasse,
 Foy le permet, Amour y obtempere.
 Foy garde amour et amour donne grace.

No. 107.

Love, by nature corrupt, is transformed by something that is divine and incorruptible. This is divine faith. Love joined to faith is made immortal, and by its new power removes from the lovers all that is ugly.

Dizain.

Amour qui est de genre naturel
 Suivant nature est de soy corruptible,
 S'il n'est aidé en ce val temporal
 De quelque effect divin incorruptible.
 Or est la foy divine compatible
 Avec amour, dont immortel est faict,
 Et par vertu en maintien, dict, ou faict,
 Des vrais amantz toute laideur efface.
 Voyla comment par souverain effect
 Foy garde amour, et amour donne grace.

No. 108.

This dizain is redolent of the New Testament : seeing that without faith man cannot please God, and that works without faith are dead, divine love, the ensample of the perfect, distils grace by the power of faith. True love gives life to works and opens to the heart fulness of joy. To think of licentiousness in connection with these words seems impossible. Hence it appears that the good, for the enjoyment of which love presses, must be a spiritual good. (Cf. no. 105.)

Dizain.

Veu que sans foy on ne peult à Dieu plaire,
 Et que sans foy toute oeuvre est morte en soy,
 Amour divin, des parfaitz l'exemplaire,
 Distille grace en la vertu de foy.
 Foy garde amour accomplissant sa loy,
 Et vray amour à l'oeuvre donne vie,
 Ouvrant sans fin au cueur joye assouvie,

En jouissant du grand bien qu'il pourchasse ;
 Ainsi malgré faulx blason et envie
 Foy garde amour et amour donne grace.

No. 124.

This is the complement of no. 108 and it is very probable that the latter is also by Jehan des Minières. Faith without works is dead, Christ reconciles man to God, and love bestows grace by the working of the Spirit, which effaces all hate.¹ The term "Spirit" is, as we saw, a characteristic word of the theology of the Libertins Spirituels.

Dizain.

L'amour de Dieu est gardé par la foy,
 Quand ceste foy en charité opere ;
 Car sans ouvrer la foy est morte en soy,
 Qui faict avoir l'ire et couroux du Pere.
 Mais par le Filz tel couroux se tempere,
 Seul vray amour, comme saint Paul descript,
 Donnant la grace en faveur de l'Esprit
 D'avoir la foy qui toute haine efface.
 Donc tu peulx veoir comment par Jesus Christ
 Foy garde amour, et amour donne grace.

J'ennime² hardiesse.

No. 144.

Reason, the only judge of humanity, is called upon to make its effects felt in two hearts linked in union. Love is to be made perfect by the working of the Spirit.³

¹ Cf. no. 107, where all ugliness is removed.

² *ennime*, apparently the same as *anime* (cf. no. 11, above). The inference is that the sound was nasal.

³ For the reference to the Spirit, cf. no. 124.

Dizain.

Seulle raison juge d'humanité,
 Fais par amour tes effectz apparostre
 Entre deux cueurs conjointz en unité,
 L'un en amour qui tout soullas faict croistre
 Et l'aulture en foy qui faict l'esprit acroistre
 A rendre amour par sa vertu parfaict,
 Tant que les deux uniz en un effect
 Prouvent tout bien en ces deux et leur race,
 Veu que raison leur dict que pour bien faict
 Foy garde amour, et amour donne grace.

No. 145.

The collection of dizains closes fittingly with a stirring picture of the victory of love over his foes. Love is represented as a captain leading forward his companions under the banner of immortal faith. "Rigueur," which probably typifies the strict interpretation of the law,¹ attacks the band. But victory, not without a struggle, lies with the soldiers of love.

Dizain.

Soubz le guidon de la foy immortelle
 Amour conduyt ses sodalz veritables,
 Lors que rigueur demonstre sa cautelle
 Pour rendre foy et les siens lamentables.
 Foy tient en main les anciennes tables,
 Ou vraie amour doit estre fixe et ferme.
 Rigueur court sus avecques maint gendarme,
 Sorty des creux de l'infornelle trace,²
 Mais à l'effort et perilleux alarme
 Foy garde amour et amour donne grace.

W. A. R. KERR.

¹ Whether the author means that divine love has saved man from the condemnation of the law in the theological sense, or whether he is thinking of human love as transcending the laws of matrimony, as taught by the Libertins Spirituels, is not clear. He may have had, and probably did have, both ideas in mind. Cf. Heroët, *Parfaite Amie*, Lyons, 1543.

² *Trace*: meaning?